THE

EVIDENCE;

OR,

Religious and Moral Gazette.

RELIGION AND MORALITY ARE THE BASIS OF HUMAN FELICITY.

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INTRODUCTION.

BEFORE proposals for this publication were issued, or the plan was thoroughly matured, this question arrested the attention of the Editor, is such a work needed? Is the state of society of that complexion, in the places in which it might probably circulate, as to afford solid grounds of encouragement, that a thing of this kind would be productive of beneficial effects?

IN determining this very material question, the Editor took into consideration, on the one hand, the numerous publications, on religious subjects, periodically issued, in this and foreign countries, under the inspection of gentlemen distinguished for piety and talents, and embracing an emense variety of interesting and important communications. He considered also, that a paper, like the one now commenced, edited by a solitary individual, would be as a drop in the ocean, compared with the many rich productions, already under the public eye.

ON the other hand, he reflected, that the publications, referred to above, pass into very few hands, comparatively, and of course are little read by people in general. He considered farther, that a weekly paper of the size of this, would be more attentively perused, than though four times the number of pages were to be issued monthly. He had often observed, that people, who are occupied with a multiplicity of cares, derive more benefit from concise treatises, which they can look through and digest, in the course of a short evening, than from voluminous productions. When the sight of a volume will discourage them, they will take up a tract with pleasure. He conceived also, that within these narrow limits, might be comprised and condensed, the grand out-lines and the most material events transpiring in the christian world, together with a rich variety of other very useful and entertaining matter.

HAVING looked at the question on both sides, dispassionately, the Editor became settled in the opinion, that a publication of this kind, was greatly

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needed, and by the blessing of heaven, would be of unspeakable utility to society.

Not willing, however, to rely too implicitly on his own opinion, respecting an object he deemed of no inconsiderable magnitude, he early embraced opportunity of consulting a number of gentlemen, in whose judgment he could place peculiar confidence. These gentlemen gave it as their unanimous sentiment, that a work of this description, conducted judiciously and with correctness, might be extensively useful, and also pledged themselves to co-operate in carrying the design into execution.

The Editor, accordingly enters on his task, with trembling diffidence of his qualifications, to conduct a work of such high responsibility. But relying on the spirit of holy anointing from above, and assured of the promptitude of his correspondents, in furnishing whatever may enrich his columns, he meets the undertaking, with a readiness and ardor, he hopes not altogether disproportioned to the magnitude of the object.

It is important in the outset of this work, to apprize the public, that the design of the Editor is not to intermeddle with the politics of the day, either directly or indirectly, and to insert nothing in any one of his numbers, which can afford a shade of suspicion on which side of the contest his mind preponderates. Not disposed to speak evil of dignities, not to depreciate civil government, nor to pretend he is torpidly indifferent to the transactions of the political theatre ; he conceives, however, he is entering a field, overspread with more fragrant flowers, abounding with richer fruits, and of infinitely higher action. The kingdoms of this world are of corruptible materials ; but that kingdom to be the governing theme of this work, is a kingdom which hath foundation. Christ holds the throne, and his cross is the instrument of victory.

In this publication, the Editor intends to adhere invariably to the great doctrines once delivered to the saints, received and generally embraced in the reformation in the beginning of the sixteenth Century, since adopted & incorporated into the articles of the church of England, received and published in the Heidelberg & Westminster confessions of faith, brought to this country by our pious ancestors, and now holden dear by all the faithful of every denomination throughout the christian world.

Practical and experimental religion will be duly appreciated, and form a conspicuous part in the ensuing work. Guarded, on the one hand, against the intemperate yieldings of a heated imagination, and against lukewarm for-

manity and apathy, on the other, the Editor will study to exhibit rational piety in her loveliest and most amiable charms. To arouse the careless, to detect the hypocritical and self-confident, and to revive the hope of the desponding penitent, and console the afflicted, will be regarded with the utmost solicitude.

While the Religious and Moral Gazette rises in the defence of truth, the assailing enemy will always be watched. Keeping nigh the Messiah's standard, it will be ready to meet the enemy in his first hostile approach. Not, however, with carnal weapons, but with those "which are mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds." It will endeavour to dismask vice of his gorgeous attire, and paint virtue in her simple dress. It will advocate the morality, not of Aristotle, Plato and Seneca, but of Christ, whose Gospel furnishes the most impressive lessons of benevolence, charity and forgiveness. Religious controversy will be excluded, unless conducted with candor, fairness and christian temper. To gain admittance into this paper, controversy must be a contest of sentiment and logic, untinctured with personal animosity and governed by the law of love.

As the object of this work is to enlighten and edify, it will aim at variety clearness and due arrangement. Herein will be exhibited a combined view of the state of the christian world; an abridgement of church history disincumbered from what may be deemed immaterial; the progress and extent of missionary exertions; accounts of religious revivals, theological discussions; expositions of dark and difficult passages of scripture; Biographical sketches, poetry, and selections from the latest and best European and American authors.

Over this Gazette let the Messiah rule. Here shall his high claims be enrolled and his devinity eulogized. Here shall the wonderful counsellor be marked, in his presiding dominion, travelling in the greatness of his strength, casting a compassionate look on Bozrah, Idumea and mount Seir, not forgetful of the apostate sons of Ham, plucking here and there one from the idol temple as a premonition of a future and more copious display of his grace; and preparing in due time to gather the outcasts of Israel, with all the ends of the earth.

With a field of such high responsibility before him, the Editor commits his work to God, with whom is the residue of the spirit, imploring the prayers of all who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, for his blessing to rest on the undertaking, without which the most arduous efforts must prove inefficacious and unsuccessful.

ON THE

DIGNITY OF HUMAN NATURE,

AND THE

WORTH OF THE SOUL.

AN ADDRESS.

SINCE we have a rational and moral existence under the government of God, it would be an impeachment of our true dignity to be indifferent, either to his claims, or to our own felicity.

A CAPACITY for happiness constitutes our worth, and the attainment of that happiness is the result of a compliance with divine requisition. Our duty and interest are inseparably united. If we neglect the former, we fail of the latter. If we obey, our interests are secure. If we disobey, they are forfeited and lost. Natural and revealed religion coincide in establishing this point, and it is attested by the enlightened of all worlds.

ADMITTING, therefore, the correctness of the principle, a field for thoughtfulness opens before us, extensive and infinitely interesting. Of what value is our existence? or what condition will God secure to us the felicity of which we are capable; and what motives does he hold out to excite our compliance with that condition, are questions too weighty to be overlooked, and deserve the strictest attention.

IF our existence were confined within the compass of this short life, the value of our being would dwindle to a mere cypher, and the dignity of man would at once vanish. In this case, to make ourselves comfortable for a few days would be the utmost at which we could aspire. But since God has given us a combination of testimony from the light of nature and scripture, that the soul is incorruptible and immortal, the dignity of human nature rises to an exalted height, and the worth of our existence expands inexpressibly.

To conceive of man in a proper light, we must view him created never to be annihilated, with faculties everlastingly enlarging, and capable of endless progress in felicity. This idea being correct, the dignity and worth of the soul have no parallel short of angelic existence. This vast globe, with its rich abundance, added to unnumbered worlds of superior magnitudes and excellence, have not the intrinsic value of the little infant which hangs at the breast. For when these shall wax old as doth a garment, and be folded and laid aside like a worn out vesture, this little one shall stand only on the confines of eternal duration, and if united to Christ, be an heir of an uninterrupted increase of blessedness. Go with your imagination to any extremity, make what use you please of numbers to express duration, and you will be yet standing on the threshold of eternity, and the saint will be only commencing in glory. Join to eternity a progress accelerated, and a sensibility enlivened by God, both augmenting by a ratio hitherto unknown, and to this add the way in which the felicity is secured and the manner of its endearments; that it is by blood, the blood of the emaculate Redeemer, and that this creature thus exalted, was taken from the very eve of destruction, by an act of infinite grace. This representation is no extravagant sally of imagination; it is no airy vision; it is only a faint picture and at most can give but a partial glimpse of the dignity of human nature and the worth of the soul.

IT is a sad effect of our degenerate state, that man overlooks his own dignity, and is taken up with little things. The pride of human nature, it is true, has led men of base minds

to boast of their superiority in the scale of being; and yet all their frothy declamation of high sounding epithets, serves only to degrade and keep men back from beholding the high sphere in which he is capable of moving. The antient heathen extolled their heroes for their bold achievements, and decreed them to the Elysian fields. Mahomet gave a paspor. to his worshippers into a paradise of sensuality and lust. In all this, however, there is little less than a denial, that man is superior to a brute.

Christianity, it is well known, has often been represented to be a thing beneath great minds, and fit only for the weak and timorous. To say nothing of Newton, Locke, Boyle and others, of equal rank, who gloried in the cross of Christ, I am bold to assert, that this very system of Christianity, viewed in its origin, connection and end, makes man the noblest work of the creator, and carries the sentiment along with it, that God has made a brighter and more full display of his attributes to restore man to the place from which he had fallen, than in all his other works. Christ Jesus in his whole work of redemption testifies to the dignity of human nature and the worth of our exisence. He took not on him the nature of angels, but the nature of man, that he might become a faithful and glorious high priest and intercessor for his people, to the end that they might be co-heirs with him of that kingdom which shall never be moved.

The same idea is strikingly confirmed by the progress of the human mind in the short period of its connection with the body. How soon, from infancy grow the eminent and profound statesman, philosopher, metaphysician and divine. He, who comprehends the various systems of national policy; he, who can measure the heavens and the earth and ascertain their magnitudes, distances and motions; he, who can make the nicest logical deductions; he, who can discern the excellency and glory of the great creator, a few days ago, were in the arms of the nurse, the most helpless and feeble of all creatures living on the earth. From these facts, what may we gather? May we not with safety conclude, that the human faculties will continue to enlarge still more and more; & that when the soul shall be "clothed upon with its house from heaven," it will diverge and lengthen in its views, with a rapidity and to an extent, beyound all present conception. This, so far from being incredible, is incontestible on principles grounded upon the firmest basis. The character and works of God open a field adequate to an endless succession of new discovery, without coming any nearer the boundary. The mind will not be confined for the want of scope; it will know no embarrassing circumstance to retard, no dead weight in itself of contrary action, but it will be assisted by every creature and every event, and nothing will be wanting which can be done by infinite power, wisdom and goodness, to enoble and enlarge its faculties. All this may be gathered with the highest safety from reason, analogy and scripture. The worth of the mind is in proportion to its magnitude, including the whole of its existence.

You will ask, is the felicity of so much existence, as what belongs to the human mind, attainable by us? And if so, what secures it to us? Are sinners of such emense value? and are they capable subjects of arriving to this most desirable end?

It is true man, by nature is an undone sinner: but it is not true, on

this account, that his soul is of the less value. The worth of a creature is not to be estimated by the goodness of his character, but by his capacity for happiness. The wicked have this capacity to as great extent as the righteous. The difference between the holy and the unholy, is not in their capacities for enjoyment, but in the temper of their hearts.

God is pleased to specify a condition, on which the felicity of our being may be secured. This condition is as low as the nature of things will admit; and it contains the essence of all his other gracious proposals and conditions on which he will receive us. The condition is a temper of heart assimulated to God's moral image, or a suitedness of views to Christ's character, laws and kingdom. To such a state of mind, God annexes a promise to be our God, and to bestow on us the blessedness of his favor. It would be a relinquishment, on God's part, of his rectitude to specify a different condition, or vary in his proposals from this standard; because he cannot in righteousness make overtures of a felicity to us, contrary in its nature to his own. The happiness of God results from his goodness. And to say that it is impossible for God, without our possessing personal goodness, to make us happy, is none different from saying, that he cannot change his own nature, or effect impossibilities.

Shall we then ask, what motives does God hold out to excite our compliance with the foregoing condition? Is he sparing in this part of dealings towards us? In his governing prudence is he keeping out of sight what is best calculated to bring us to realize our true dignity and the worth of our being?

That we might appreciate the worth of our existence and secure the felicity of which we are capable, God has been astonishingly liberal in the inducements he has laid before us. Our creator has treated the subject according to all its magnitude and importance. The theme of reconciliation between God and sinful creatures, was eternally in the mind of the sacred trinity, formed a material article in the covenant of redemption between the Father, Son and Holy Ghost; and that it might be effected, a revelation must be made containing information which could not be gathered from the works of creation and providence; the second person in the Godhead must descend to earth and become incarnate, and by his own blood open the door of reconciliation. Angels have and do, wait on this very work; more than four thousand years of miracle were occupied in reference to it, and the Holy Ghost, by the mouth of all the prophets and apostles, plead the cause of reconciliation, with groanings, which could not be uttered. We see the light in which God views and treats our interests. He is pleased, however, to go farther, that he might not be impeached in judgment. In his undeviating word, he is this very day opening the scenes of eternity. In this he comes nigh unto you. He places on your shelves the heavenly treasure, and knocks at your hearts by the spirit of awakening. Apprizing you of the loss of the soul, he leads you to the slippery steep, uncovers destruction from beneath, and lets you look into the pit of ceaseless despair. In this word, he leads you to Calvary, places you before the cross, invites you to behold the dying agonies of the Savior, reaches out to you the price of his blood, and points you to the triumph of the glorified.

To affect you in view of interests, which if lost, the whole world could not redeem, God addresses you in his governing providence. With all

the tenderness of a father, he admonishes you of the instability of all things earthly. He lets you see that your life is but a vapor, and that every thing beneath the sun is hastening to a close; that your bodies, so fearfully made, your limbs, so curiously turned, with all their strength, activity and beauty, must decay, corrupt and be eaten of worms; that your possessions, the price of industry, care and painful toil, will soon pass into the hands of the stranger, and be nothing to you henceforward forever; that the houses you have built, the lands you have cultivated, the flocks and herds you have fed, and the children you have nourished, will never again be seen by you, and that you will be taken from every tender endearment and connection of life, and that though you may be saught after, you will not be found.

Knowing your liability to be caught, and turned aside from the high interests of eternity, by the glittering splendors of worldly greatness, God invites you to look back on antiquity, and behold its ruins. The glory of Babylon and Tyre is departed, and not a vestage is left of their former magnificence and greatness. Where are the mighty heroes of Greece and Rome, the Alexanders and Cesars, before whom the world trembled? Their names are on record, in fulfilment of this prophesy; "The Lord of hosts, hath purposed it, to stain the pride of human glory, and bring into contempt all the honorable of the earth." The present is an era in which God is exhibiting one of the most astonishing scenes in the great drama of human action. You behold nation rising against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, desolating wars, conflagrations, sacked cities, garments rolled in blood, and the great and the mighty mingling in promiscuous carnage. This convulsed state of the world indicates the approaching crisis, when all earthly dominion shall cease, and be no more. Amid all these commotions, when God is shaking all nations, and the earth and the seas are in tumultuous confusion, under the out-pouring of the sixth vial, you may behold the Messiah fixing his standard, and paving the way for his universal reign. Nothing since the commencement of the sixteenth century, if since the apostolic age, has equalled the effort now made by the friends of Zion. They have awoke from their slumbers, and trimmed their lamps. The faithful, in different parts of the christian world, have cast a compassionate look on their heathen brethren, who were perishing for lack of vision, and are surmounting every obstacle to carry the gospel to the ends of the earth. Rising above danger, discouragement and difficulty, they have manifested a zeal truly apostolic. They have already gone to far distant climes. They have fixed their standard to the north, to the south, to the east, and to the west. The missionaries of the present day, have reached the two hemispheres of the pagan world. They have penetrated the interior of Africa; they have encompassed Calcutta, New-Holland and the Islands; they have sought out Novazembla, Labrador and the highest northern latitudes ever trod by human foot. And to thousands of these benighted pagans have they made known the riches of redeeming love. All this scene is before you, that you might feel the worth of your existence and act up to your true dignity.

From the very spot on which you stand, you can look on the field of divine action, and see the wheels of providence moving towards the final consummation of earthly things. You behold a world of creatures forming characters for eternity. That you might wisely make up your

minds, on the grand interests of your being, God is signalizing you by his nearest approach. You have not to say, " who shall ascend up to heaven to bring Christ down ?" The part of the vineyard you occupy is a highly favored spot. You are husbandmen; but you have the richest part of the vineyard, and the first fruits of the vintage are offered to your hand. Your labor is not in the twilight, but under the meridian sun. If with indifference therefore you can sport with your interests, thus nigh the gate of heaven, you must sustain a loss, which the scenes of eternity are only adequate to unfold.

FRAGMENTS.

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REMARKABLE SAYINGS OF MR. PHILIP HENRY.

THE devil cozens us of all our time, by cozening us of our present time.

THAT is always best for us, which is best for our souls.

IF the end of one mercy were not the beginning of another, we should be undone. New mercies call for new returns of praise; and these will fetch in new mercies.

WHEN the mind and the condition meet, there is contentment. Haman was discontented at the court, Ahab on the throne, Adam in Paradise, and the angels that fell were discontented in heaven itself.

FOUR things he was most anxious should not be against him, the word of God, his own conscience, the prayers of the poor, and the account of Godly ministers.

HE that hath a blind conscience, which sees nothing, a dead conscience which feels nothing, and a dumb conscience, which says nothing, is as miserable as a man can be out of hell.

Life of Mr. Henry.

ANECDOTE.

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ARCHBISHOP LEIGHTON.

ONE day, in which there happened a tremendous storm of lightning and thunder, as Archbishop Leighton was going from Glasgow to Dumblaine, he was descried, when at a considerable distance, by two men of bad character. They had not courage to rob him; but wishing to fall on some method of extorting money from him, one of them presently said, I will lie down by the wayside as if I were dead; and you shall inform the archbishop that I was killed by the lightning, and beg money of him to bury me. When the archbishop arrived at the spot, the wicked wretch told him this fabricated story, who, having sympathized with the survivor, gave him money, and proceeded on his journey. But when the man returned to his companion, he found him really lifeless! Immediately he began to exclaim aloud, oh, Sir, he is dead! oh Sir, he is dead! On this, the archbishop returned; and discovering the fraud, said, it is a dangerous thing to trifle with the judgment of God.

Scot's Miss. Mag.

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